

West Indies

The West Indies are a chain of about 1,000 islands in the CARIBBEAN SEA, extending in an arc from the southern tip of Florida to the northeastern corner of South America. They consist of three groups: BAHAMA ISLANDS, Greater Antilles, and Lesser Antilles (see ANTILLES, GREATER AND LESSER). Ranging in size from Cuba (110,922 sq km/42,827 sq mi) to Saba (13 sq km/5 sq mi), the islands of the West Indies have a total land area of about 236,000 sq km (91,000 sq mi). The largest islands, part of the Greater Antilles group, are Cuba, Hispaniola (divided between the Dominican Republic and Haiti), Jamaica, and Puerto Rico. Most of the Lesser Antilles islands, which include the WINDWARD ISLANDS and the LEEWARD ISLANDS, Barbados, and Trinidad and Tobago, are formed by peaks of volcanic mountains of relatively recent geological formation. The highest point of the West Indies is in the Dominican Republic, where Pico Duarte (Duarte Peak) reaches 3,175 m (10,417 ft). The climate is tropical, with temperatures averaging about 27 deg C (80 deg F). Rainfall varies according to elevation and location but usually averages 500-1,000 mm (20-40 in).

The original inhabitants of the West Indies were ARAWAK and CARIB Indians, but the present population consists of descendants of Spanish, French, British, Dutch, Portuguese, Swedish, and Danish settlers; African slaves mostly from West Africa; and Asian Indians, who arrived from India during the 19th century as indentured workers. Chinese, Lebanese, and South and North Americans also have joined the population. Racial mixture is the prevailing condition in the West Indies, although some countries—such as Jamaica and Haiti—have an almost completely black population, and others—such as Cuba—are mostly white.

The West Indies produce a wide variety of tropical fruits, spices, sugar, coffee, and cacao. Petroleum is extracted from Trinidad and its surrounding waters, and bauxite is mined in Jamaica, Haiti, and the Dominican Republic. Manganese, nickel, and copper are found on some of the other islands, including Cuba. Industries include sugar, rum, tobacco, and fruit processing, textile manufacture, and mineral refining. Tourism is a major source of income.

Discovered by Christopher Columbus and other Spanish explorers during the late 15th and early 16th centuries, the islands in the Caribbean were called the West Indies because they originally were thought to be part of Asia. In subsequent centuries, the West Indies were colonized by European powers, but most of the larger and many of the smaller islands by now have become independent. The remaining islands are possessions of the United Kingdom, the United States, France, and the Netherlands.

Thomas Mathews

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Bahama Islands

The Commonwealth of the Bahamas, an independent member of the Commonwealth of Nations, is composed of about 700 islands and more than 2,000 cays, islets, and rocks in the Atlantic Ocean. Located about 97 km (60 mi) off the southern Florida coast, they extend some 1,224 km (760 mi) southeastward to within 80 km (50 mi) of Cuba. Their area is 13,939 sq km (5,382 sq mi), but they spread over an area of more than 233,000 sq km (90,000 sq mi) of the Atlantic. The population is 255,811 (1992 est.). Scenic beaches and mild climate make the Bahamas a major tourist resort.

Land and People

The main islands include Andros (the largest), New Providence, Grand Bahama, Eleuthera, Great Abaco, and Great Inagua. The archipelago generally comprises an undulating limestone platform that is derived from coral. The climate is semitropical, with an average summer temperature of 28 deg C (83 deg F) and an average winter temperature of 21 deg C (70 deg F). Annual rainfall averages 1,168 mm (46 in) and is concentrated in May-June and September-October. Large Caribbean pine forests thrive on several of the islands.

More than 80% of the population are black. Only 22 of the islands have permanent residents. About half the total population lives on the small island of New Providence, the site of the capital, NASSAU. Other important settlements are Freeport and West End on Grand Bahama.

Economy

Tourism is the Bahamas' major source of revenue. Climate, gambling casinos, and sport fishing on the out islands contribute to the continued attraction of tourist revenues. Also, liberal tax laws have encouraged expatriates to settle in the Bahamas from countries such as the United States, Britain, and Canada. The tax structure has also attracted many foreign banks, which have major offices on New Providence. Agriculture has played only a minor role in the economy, although the government is promoting agriculture and fishing to lessen the dependence on imported foodstuffs.

The Bahamas has long served as an oil transshipment point to the United States, but the health of oil-related industries (including a government-owned refinery on Grand Bahama) fluctuates with the world demand for oil.

History

Many scholars believe that Christopher COLUMBUS made his first landing (Oct. 12, 1492) in the Western Hemisphere on SAN SALVADOR ISLAND of the Bahamas. The first British settlement on the islands was established on Eleuthera in 1648. When the islands became (1670) a British colony, New Providence was made the seat of government. After attempts at farming and fishing proved unsuccessful, the economy eventually settled on tourism after World War II. In 1964 the Bahamas were granted internal self-government, and the first elections under universal suffrage were held in 1967. The islands became fully independent on July 10, 1973. The British monarch appoints the governor-general, but actual governmental control is in the hands of the prime minister and the bicameral parliament.

The majority party for many years after 1967 was the Progressive Liberal party, whose leader, Lynden Pindling, was prime minister. In the 1980s the islands became a major center for trade in illicit drugs, straining relations between the Bahamas and the United States. Pindling was increasingly attacked by foreign and domestic critics for his apparent tolerance of the drug trade and was accused of benefiting financially from it. Economic decline in the late 1980s and into the 1990s further eroded his political support, and in August 1992 Pindling was swept out of office in parliamentary elections. Hubert Ingraham, a former colleague of Pindling's and leader of the Free National Movement, became prime minister.

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Barbados

The Commonwealth of the Bahamas, an independent member of the Commonwealth of Nations, is composed of 26 islands and more than 2,000 cays, islets, and rocks in the Atlantic Ocean. Located about 65 km (40 mi) north of South America, the islands are 1,344 km (835 mi) south-southwest to within 80 km (50 mi) of Cuba. The area is 13,436 sq km (5,188 sq mi), but the land area is more than 1,000 sq km (386 sq mi) of the islands. The population is 222,614 (1992 est.). Some beaches are still closed to the public because of the threat of hurricanes.

Land and People

The main islands of the Bahamas (the largest) are New Providence (Grand Bahama), Great Abaco, and West End. The Bahamian people are generally of African descent, but there is also a small European population. The climate is subtropical, with an average annual temperature of 25 deg C (77 deg F) and an average rainfall of 1,500 mm (60 in) and is concentrated in May-June. Annual rainfall averages 1,500 mm (60 in) and is concentrated in May-June. The islands are divided into several districts.

More than 80% of the population are black. Only 2% of the islands have permanent residents. The total population was on the island of New Providence, the site of the capital, NASSAU. Other important settlements are Freeport and West End on Grand Bahama.

Economy

Tourism is the Bahamas' main source of revenue. Climate, gambling casinos, and other factors on the islands contribute to the continued attraction of tourists. The Bahamas has a long history of tourism, and the islands have been a popular destination for tourists since the 19th century. The Bahamas is a member of the Caribbean Community and Common Market (CARICOM) and the Organisation of American States (OAS). The Bahamas has a long history of tourism, and the islands have been a popular destination for tourists since the 19th century. The Bahamas is a member of the Caribbean Community and Common Market (CARICOM) and the Organisation of American States (OAS). The Bahamas has a long history of tourism, and the islands have been a popular destination for tourists since the 19th century. The Bahamas is a member of the Caribbean Community and Common Market (CARICOM) and the Organisation of American States (OAS).

The Bahamas has long served as an international port for the United States, and the islands are also a major source of government revenue. The Bahamas is a member of the Caribbean Community and Common Market (CARICOM) and the Organisation of American States (OAS). The Bahamas has a long history of tourism, and the islands have been a popular destination for tourists since the 19th century. The Bahamas is a member of the Caribbean Community and Common Market (CARICOM) and the Organisation of American States (OAS).

History

Many scholars believe that Christopher Columbus (1492) made his first landing (1492) on the island of New Providence (Grand Bahama) in 1492. The first British settlement on the island was established in 1649. When the island became a British colony, the population was made up of slaves and indentured servants. After the end of slavery and indentured servitude, the economy was based on tourism and agriculture. In 1966, the Bahamas was granted internal self-government, and the first election was held in 1967. The island became fully independent on July 21, 1973. The Bahamas is a member of the Caribbean Community and Common Market (CARICOM) and the Organisation of American States (OAS). The Bahamas has a long history of tourism, and the islands have been a popular destination for tourists since the 19th century. The Bahamas is a member of the Caribbean Community and Common Market (CARICOM) and the Organisation of American States (OAS).

The majority party for many years was the Progressive Liberal Party, which leader Lynden Pindling was prime minister. In the 1980s, the island became a major center for trade in illicit drugs, attracting attention from the United States and the United Kingdom. Pindling was impeached by the legislature and deposed in 1982. His successor, the late prime minister, was a member of the Progressive Liberal Party. In August 1982, Pindling was elected out of office in parliamentary elections. Under Pindling's leadership, a former colleague of Pindling's and leader of the Free National Movement, became prime minister.

Government

Barbados is a member of the Commonwealth of Nations. The Bahamas (1987) is a member of the Commonwealth of Nations. The Bahamas is a member of the Caribbean Community and Common Market (CARICOM) and the Organisation of American States (OAS). The Bahamas has a long history of tourism, and the islands have been a popular destination for tourists since the 19th century. The Bahamas is a member of the Caribbean Community and Common Market (CARICOM) and the Organisation of American States (OAS).

Dominican Republic

The Dominican Republic occupies the eastern two-thirds of the Caribbean island of HISPANIOLA, located between Cuba and Puerto Rico. Haiti occupies the western third. Columbus landed on the island in 1492, and the earliest Spanish colony in the Americas was established there. Independent since 1844, the Dominican Republic has been dependent upon U.S. economic interests for much of its history.

LAND AND PEOPLE

Hispaniola is a mountainous island, with the most important chain, the Cordillera Central, extending across the western section of the Dominican Republic. The highest and the lowest points in the whole Caribbean area lie within a short distance of each other in the Dominican Republic. The highest point is Duarte Peak, with an elevation of 3,174 m (10,414 ft); the lowest point (45 m/148 ft below sea level) is found at Lake Enriquillo, only 85 km (50 mi) to the southwest. In the north, running parallel to the Atlantic, is a fertile agricultural region known as the Cibao Valley, drained by the North Yaque River. SANTO DOMINGO, the capital, largest city, and largest port, is located on the southern coast. The tropical climate (average annual temperature, 25 deg C/77 deg F) is ameliorated at the higher altitudes and by the northeastern trade winds. Rainfall averages from 762 mm (30 in) along the Haitian border in the southwest to 2,540 mm (100 in) in the northeast.

The Dominican population is the result of nearly four centuries of mixing of European and African elements. The original Indian inhabitants were either absorbed or eliminated within the first 100 years of the Spanish conquest. Haitians are the largest minority group. Ninety-five percent of the population is Roman Catholic. Primary education is free and compulsory for all children between 7 and 14 years of age. Almost 70% of the population is literate. The country has five universities, including the University of Santo Domingo (1538), the oldest university in the Americas.

ECONOMY

Agriculture is the traditional mainstay of the Dominican economy, with sugarcane being the leading cash crop produced for export. Other important export crops are cocoa and coffee. Nickel is the leading mineral export; bauxite, gold, and rock salt are other significant mineral resources.

Although the government is attempting to expand industry, most industrial products (and many foodstuffs) must be imported, largely from the United States. Tourism is challenging agriculture as the more important economic sector.

HISTORY AND GOVERNMENT

In 1492, Christopher COLUMBUS discovered the island of Hispaniola, and it was the site of the first Spanish settlements in the New World. Columbus lived here for many years, and it is believed that his remains are in the cathedral in Santo Domingo. Other New World colonies proved more profitable to the Spanish, however, and Santo Domingo, as the entire colony was called, was neglected. The French began to settle the western end of Hispaniola, and in 1795 the entire island came under French rule. Haiti became an independent nation in 1804, and in 1822 it took over the eastern portion of the island. In 1844 the Spanish-speaking inhabitants of the east rebelled against the Haitians and proclaimed their independence, calling their nation the Dominican Republic.

The new nation experienced severe economic difficulties, and in 1905 the United States established partial control of the Dominican economy to protect American investors. Increasing debts and internal disorders resulted, in 1916, in the occupation of the country by U.S. Marines. In 1924 the occupation ended. Rafael TRUJILLO came to power in 1930 and established a dictatorship that lasted until his assassination in 1961. In December 1962 the first free elections in nearly 40 years brought the leftist Juan BOSCH to the presidency. His reform program led to his overthrow by the military in September 1963. When his supporters attempted to restore him to power in 1965, civil war broke out, and U.S. troops were sent in to restore order and the status quo. In 1966, Joaquin BALAGUER was elected president. His authoritarian rule, supported by the right wing, continued until the election of 1978, when he was defeated by Antonio Guzman, who, in turn, was defeated by Salvador Jorge Blanco in 1982.

The Dominican economic decline was an ongoing issue in the 1986 and 1990 elections. Balaguer, elderly and blind, narrowly won fourth and fifth terms as president. Ex-president Blanco was convicted in absentia of corruption in 1988. In 1992 he was sentenced to 20 years in prison.

Domestic Republic

The Dominican Republic occupies the eastern two-thirds of the Caribbean island of Hispaniola, located between Cuba and Puerto Rico. Haiti occupies the western third. Colonial rule ended in 1492, and the island was then Spanish colony in the Americas was established in 1494, the Dominican Republic has been dependent upon U.S. economic interests for much of its history.

LAND AND PEOPLE

Hispaniola is a mountainous island, with the most rugged terrain in the Caribbean. The Dominican Republic occupies the eastern two-thirds of the island. The highest point in the island is Pico Duarte, which rises to a peak of 15,475 ft (4,716 m). The lowest point (the lowest point in the Caribbean) is found at Lake Enriquillo, only 25 ft (7.6 m) above sea level. The island is a fertile agricultural region known as the Santo Domingo Valley, which is the center of the island's economy. The capital, Santo Domingo, is located on the southern coast. The island's climate (average annual temperature 22 deg C/72 deg F) is characterized by the highest altitudes and by the southern coast. Rainfall averaged from 722 mm (28 in) along the Haitian border in the southwest to 2,547 mm (100 in) in the northeast.

The Dominican population is the result of nearly four centuries of mixing of European and African elements. The original Indian inhabitants were all or almost all exterminated within the first 100 years of the Spanish conquest. Negroes and the largest minority group. Hispaniola's population is 7,000,000. Primary education is free and compulsory for all children between 7 and 14 years of age. About 70% of the population is literate. The country has two universities, including the University of Santo Domingo (1592), the oldest university in the Americas.

ECONOMY

Agriculture is the traditional mainstay of the Dominican economy, with sugarcane being the leading cash crop. Cattle, sheep, and pigs are also raised. The country is rich in natural resources, including gold, silver, and copper. The country is also rich in natural resources, including gold, silver, and copper.

Although the government is attempting to expand industry, manufacturing remains a very important sector. The country is largely dependent on the United States. Tourism is a major source of foreign exchange, and the country is a major source of foreign exchange.

HISTORY AND GOVERNMENT

In 1492, Christopher Columbus discovered the island of Hispaniola, and it was the site of the first Spanish settlement in the New World. Columbus lived here for nearly two years, and he believed that the continent was in the Caribbean. The island was named after Christopher Columbus. The island was named after Christopher Columbus. The island was named after Christopher Columbus.

The new nation experienced severe economic difficulties, and in 1808 the United States established partial control of the Dominican economy to protect American interests. The country was then a part of the United States. The country was then a part of the United States. The country was then a part of the United States.

The Dominican Republic was an ongoing issue in the 19th and 20th centuries. The country was then a part of the United States. The country was then a part of the United States. The country was then a part of the United States.

Under the constitution of 1966 the government is headed by a president and vice-president elected every four years by universal adult suffrage. The bicameral National Congress comprises a 30-member senate and 120-member chamber of deputies. Its members serve 4-year terms.

Thomas G. Mathews

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Under the constitution of 1966 the government is headed by a president and vice-president elected every four years by universal adult suffrage. The bicameral House of Congress comprises a 30-member Senate and 120-member House of Deputies. Its members serve 4-year terms.

Thomas G. Mahoney

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Ponce de Leon, Juan

{pohn'-say day lay-ohn'}

The Spanish explorer Juan Ponce de Leon, c. 1460-1521, is credited with the discovery of Florida. As a teenager he joined Spanish forces that eventually defeated the Moors of Granada, and in 1493 he accompanied Christopher Columbus on his second voyage to America. Ponce de Leon helped crush Indian revolts on the island of Hispaniola and was rewarded (1508) with a commission to explore Borinquen (Puerto Rico). He conquered that island and served (1509-12) as its governor, winning both fame and fortune as well as royal support. King Ferdinand II granted (1512) Ponce de Leon a patent to discover and settle the "island of Bimini." His three ships sailed through the Bahamas and reached land near the site of Saint Augustine during the Easter season of 1513. Because of the holiday Pascua Florida or because of the profusion of flowers, he named the land Florida. He did not carry orders to evangelize the natives, but according to legend he was seeking the Fountain of Youth--a rejuvenating, tonic spring that Caribbean natives had described. He explored the Florida Keys and part of the west coast of the peninsula before returning to Puerto Rico by way of Cuba. In 1514, Ponce de Leon received a royal commission to colonize the "isle of Florida," but he did not return to Florida until 1521. In July he was mortally wounded by an Indian arrow and returned to Havana, where he died.

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From the East, 1975

(1975-1976 day 1975-1976)

The Spanish explorer Juan Ponce de Leon (1469-1521) is credited with the discovery of Florida. As a teenager he joined Spanish forces that eventually defeated the Aztecs of Mexico, and in 1493 he accompanied Christopher Columbus on his second voyage to America. Ponce de Leon helped to establish settlements on the island of Hispaniola and was rewarded (1500) with a commission to explore Florida (Florida 1500). He conquered San Juan and named (1502-1503) as his government, winning with him and his men as well as royal support. King Ferdinand II granted (1512) Ponce de Leon a grant of discovery and made him "lord of Florida" for three years. Ponce de Leon and his men landed near the site of St. Augustine during the Easter season of 1513. Members of the Spanish Florida in because of the position of power. He named the land Florida. The city and early efforts to evangelize the natives, but according to legend he was seeking the Fountain of Youth--a legendary fabled spring that (Spanish) natives had described. He explored the Florida Keys and part of the west coast of the peninsula before returning to Spain by way of Cuba. In 1514, Ponce de Leon received a royal commission to colonize the state of Florida, but he did not return to Florida until 1515. In July he was mortally wounded by an Indian arrow and returned to Spain, where he died.

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Hispaniola

{his-pan-ee-oh'-luh}

Hispaniola is an island that lies between Cuba and Puerto Rico, washed by the Atlantic Ocean on the north and the Caribbean Sea on the south. The second-largest island in the West Indies, it is divided into two countries, HAITI in the west and the DOMINICAN REPUBLIC in the east; it has an area of 76,480 sq km (29,530 sq mi). The terrain, characterized by alternating bands of mountain ranges, valleys, and plains, is rugged; more than a third of the total area lies above 460 m (1,500 ft), and the highest point in the West Indies, Pico Duarte (3,175 m/10,417 ft), is on the island. The climate is subtropical, with an average annual temperature of 25 deg C (77 deg F) and rainfall of about 1,400 mm (55 in). Coffee grows in the highlands; livestock is raised, and rice, sugarcane, cotton, and tobacco are grown on the irrigated plains. Mining of mineral resources is an increasingly important industry.

Discovered and named La Isla Espanola by Christopher Columbus in 1492, the eastern section of the island was settled by the Spanish and used as a base for further expansion into South and Central America. During the 17th century the French established sugar plantations on the western end of the island. This section was ceded to France in 1697.

Hispinosa

(hispano-01-10)

Hispinosa is an island that lies between Cuba and Puerto Rico, washed by the Atlantic Ocean on the north and the Caribbean Sea on the south. The second-largest island in the West Indies, it extends into the Caribbean Sea for 147 miles (237 km) and has a total area of 10,400 sq km (4,016 sq mi). The terrain is rugged, with a high mountain range in the center, and a low, flat area in the south. The island is divided into two main parts by a deep, narrow channel. The northern part is higher and more rugged, with a high mountain range in the center. The southern part is lower and flatter, with a low, flat area in the south. The island is divided into two main parts by a deep, narrow channel. The northern part is higher and more rugged, with a high mountain range in the center. The southern part is lower and flatter, with a low, flat area in the south.

Discovered and named by Christopher Columbus in 1492, the eastern portion of the island was settled by the Spanish and used as a base for further exploration into South and Central America. During the 17th century the French established sugar plantations on the western end of the island. The eastern portion was ceded to France in 1807.

Dutch West India Company

The Dutch West India Company, a trading company established in the Dutch Republic, was the creator of the 17th-century Dutch trading empire along the Atlantic coasts of Africa and the Americas. It received its charter in 1621, when the war to preserve Dutch independence from Spain was resumed after a 12-year truce. The company was founded primarily to sap the Spanish war effort by attacking the trade between Spain and its American colonies; the company's most famous success came in 1628, off the coast of Cuba, when Piet Hein captured the Spanish silver fleet with its enormous and valuable booty.

Privateering, however, gave way to building colonies in Brazil, Dutch Guiana (now Surinam), the Antilles, and NEW NETHERLAND, which became a province of the company in 1623. The company also established fortresses on the west coast of Africa from which black slaves were shipped across the Atlantic. In 1654, however, Brazil was lost to Portugal, and in 1664 England took New Netherland. The company remained in deep financial difficulties for the rest of its existence; its principal activity remained the slave trade. The charter of the Dutch West India Company was not renewed in 1791, and its possessions and debts were taken over by the Dutch government. It disappeared completely after the 1794 conquest of the Dutch Republic by France.

Herbert H. Rowen

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Dutch West India Company

The Dutch West India Company, a trading company established in the Dutch Republic, was the owner of the 17th-century Dutch trading empire along the Atlantic coast of Africa and the Americas. It received its charter in 1621, when the year of previous Dutch independence from Spain was renewed after a 15-year truce. The company was founded primarily to ease the Spanish war effort by blocking the trade between Spain and its American colonies; the company's most famous success came in 1628 on the coast of Cuba when it defeated the Spanish fleet with its enormous and valuable fleet.

Investing, however, gave way to building colonies in Brazil, Dutch Guiana (now Guayana), the Antilles, and New Netherland, which became a province of the company in 1614. The company also established fortresses on the west coast of Africa from which black slaves were shipped across the Atlantic. In 1614, however, Dutch was not to Portugal, and in 1624 England took New Netherland. The company remained in deep financial difficulties for the rest of its existence; its principal assets remained the slave trade. The charter of the Dutch West India Company was not renewed in 1701, and the possessions and debts were taken over by the Dutch government. It disappeared completely when the 1795 conquest of the Dutch Republic by France.

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de Soto, Hernando

Hernando de Soto, b. c.1500, is the Spanish explorer in America credited with discovery of the Mississippi River. De Soto served under Pedrarias Davila in Central America and joined the expeditions of Diego de Almagro and Francisco Pizarro that conquered the Incas of Peru. In 1537 he was named governor of Cuba and given permission to conquer Florida.

Sailing from Spain in 1538, de Soto landed on the Florida coast south of Tampa Bay on May 30, 1539. He advanced northward through the present states of Florida, Georgia, and the Carolinas, following the ruthless practice of capturing the chief of a village, holding him for ransom, and plundering the town of food and women. After wintering in Florida, de Soto's force marched through Georgia and Tennessee into Alabama. After a bloody battle with the Indians at Maubilla in October, the greatly depleted force made its way into Mississippi, where it spent the winter of 1540-41.

In May 1541, de Soto's expedition reached the Mississippi River, which it crossed, either in the vicinity of Memphis or at Sunflower Landing. De Soto and his men were perhaps the first Europeans to see that river inland, although Alvarez de Pineda had discovered its tidal bore in the Gulf of Mexico in 1519. The expedition continued into Arkansas and made its winter camp, perhaps in the vicinity of Fort Smith, near the present Arkansas-Oklahoma border. It then returned to the Mississippi, where de Soto died on May 21, 1542. De Soto's expedition failed in its goal of bringing fabulous new riches to Spain. It did, however, blaze trails throughout the southeastern part of North America.

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de Soto Hernando

Hernando de Soto is the Spanish explorer in America credited with discovery of the Mississippi River. He sailed under Pizarro's flag in Central America and joined the expedition of Diego de Almagro and Francisco Pizarro that conquered the Inca of Peru. In 1537 he was named Governor of Cuba and given permission to conquer Florida.

Coming from Spain in 1538, he was landed on the Florida coast south of Tampa Bay on May 30, 1539. He advanced northward through the present states of Florida, Georgia, and the Carolinas, following the course of a river to the Gulf of Mexico. He was guided by a native Indian, and obtained the name of the river. After reaching the Gulf, he sailed through Georgia and Tennessee into Alabama. After a bloody battle with the Indians at Mabila in October, the greatly depleted force turned its way into Mississippi, where it spent the winter of 1540-41.

In May 1541, de Soto's expedition reached the Mississippi River where a wooded island in the vicinity of Memphis or at Paducah Landing. De Soto and his men were preparing the first 2000 men to see the river inland, although Alvarado de Pineda had discovered its mouth in the Gulf of Mexico in 1519. The expedition continued into Arkansas and made its winter camp, perhaps in the vicinity of Fort Smith, near the present Arkansas-Oklahoma border. It then returned to the Mississippi where de Soto died on May 21, 1542. De Soto's expedition failed in its quest of bringing Spanish new riches to Spain. It did, however, blaze trails throughout the southeastern part of North America.

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